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(FOUO 4/80)

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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

POSSIBLE ALGERIAN COOPERATION IN NOUADHIBOU PETROLEUM REFINERY

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 14 Dec 79 p 3459

[Text] Since the reopening of an Algerian Embassy in Nouakchott 7 December, Algero-Mauritanian cooperation is building up on the economic level with the sojourn in Mauritania of a delegation of Algerian petroleum experts come to Nouakchott to study the possibilities of Algerian collaboration in setting up a Nouadhibou refinery. This mission is a follow-up of the visit to Algiers of Mr Mohamed El Moktar Ould Zamel, Mauritanian minister of industry and mines, during which this refinery question was the main topic of the discussions.

The Nouadhibou refinery, which an Austrian company built 3 years ago, including its entire equipment, cost around \$140 million. It was to produce 1 million tons of refined oil per year. Mauritania, whose yearly consumption exceeds 350,000 tons, counted on exporting the balance of its output to some neighboring countries. However, as it was not producing crude oil, Nouakchott signed a supply contract with Algeria whose "light weight" crude oil was more suitable for the Nouadhibou refinery.

The contract was concluded at a time when Algeria and Mauritania were in very close cooperation. The breach in relations between the two countries in 1976, an outcome of the fighting in Western Sahara, prevented its fulfillment: the refinery, therefore, as it lacked supplies, could not begin to operate. Nigeria at the appointed time, was to supply the necessary oil, but the projects, along these lines, were quickly abandoned because of operating expenses.

The Austrian builder recently agreed to cut the invoice down \$15 million. The Mauritanian Government requested Algerian assistance to insure the opening and procurement of supplies for a refinery considered in Nouakchott "one of the most ill-starred inheritances" left by the former government.

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ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

IMPACT OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST MOVEMENTS ON THE MAGHREB

Curbs on Fundamentalist Activity

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Dec 79 pp 34-36

[Article by Jean-Louis Buchet: "This Disturbing Islam"]

[Text] Supporters of the "Islamic revival movement" were attacked in a lengthy editorial captioned "Islam: Vigilance Is Imperative!" and published in the 6 December edition of the Tunisian daily L'ACTION, the organ of the PSD (Destourian Socialist Party). This article argued that it was necessary "to bar the way to sorcerer's apprentices, debunk the champions of obscurantism, denounce the current flagrant abuse of a religion and the faith of a people, and neutralize those subversives who disguise their black subversive designs under the white veil of Islam."

Our correspondent Souhayr Belhassen, author of a major investigative report on contentious Islam in Tunisia, tells us that Tunisian officials have been issuing a succession of warnings over the past few weeks. A veritable campaign has been launched against what are termed "pseudoreligious and subversive movements." Mohamed Sayah, a PSD director, stated on Monday 10 December that "under the cover of religion, this fundamentalist movement is acting in a manner harmful to religion and hostile to the reformist movement which made its appearance very early in this century and whose torchbearers are men like Bourguiba."

Thus, after having long silently observed this fundamentalist movement's rise, the government decided to cross swords with the Moslem fundamentalists. Admittedly in late November some of the preaching in the mosques had taken on an openly political tone, and Islamic university students had become militant. It was under these circumstances, that the movement's weekly newspaper, AL-MUJTAMA', was suspended for 3 months on 7 December. On Thursday 20 December, its editor, Rached Ghanouchi, was summoned to appear before an examining magistrate.

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Wave of Religious Fervor

Having attained a circulation of more than 20,000 less than 6 months after its first issue, AL-MUJTAMA' was indeed a great popular success. It indirectly criticized the government which it considered guilty of neglecting Islam. It viewed the Iranian revolution as exemplary. In its last issue, it published an interview with members of the delegation from Iran that had been prevented from making a statement at the Arab summit meeting in Tunis on 20-22 November. The front page of that issue carried a picture of Teheran students tearing up an American flag, and commentaries implicitly approving the taking of the American hostages.

This pro-Khomeyni slant--contrasting sharply with the government's prudent attitude--coupled with criticism of the regime accused of having committed the great "crime" of attacking the Islamic Zitouna University, obviously irritated President Bourguiba. "Enough is enough" was his reaction. After having shockingly discovered that the newspapers of the fundamentalists were being printed on party presses, the president took Mohamed Sayah to task. Following which, the PSD director announced, in the first week of December, that he had received instructions from the chief of state to conduct a campaign of explanation and clarification.

The reaction of the Islamic leaders to all this was to brace themselves and avoid any provocations. In the meantime, mosque attendance continues to increase and people fervently listen to the preachings of such men as Hassen Ghodbani or Abdelfateh Moro, two of the movement's principal leaders.

The Tunisian regime is more overtly "modernistic" than the Algerian and Moroccan regimes. It has also taken a firmer principled position with regard to the religious revival. But in Algiers, as in Rabat or Casablanca, there are equally old and large currents of Islamic ideas and sentiment. And, as is the case in Tunisia, these movements are now noticeably on the rise in combination with a resurgence of religious feeling among the masses. Like elsewhere in the Moslem world, it is difficult--in these early days of the 15th century after the Hegira--to distinguish between the religious ground swell, the "fallout" from the turbulence in Iran, and political protest. But everywhere there is a noticeable gap between the official views and the feelings of part of the population on the subject of Iran, for example, or on the application of the principles of Islam. Religious fervor and social aspirations have become concomitant weapons in the hands of the "militants of Islam."

Wave of Political Protest

In Algeria, for example, there is no movement similar to the overt Tunisian "Islamic revival." Recently, however and particularly for the "salat-al-tarawih" (prayers for the vigil of Ramadan), the number of young people in the mosques has increased to an unusual extent. More and more men can be seen wearing a sort of Egyptian "galabiah," a flowing white robe heretofore

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unknown in Algeria but now worn as a religious symbol. The movement has gained the lycees [secondary schools]. In a number of these schools, students in the higher grades, traditionally less observant of religious practices, have compelled their teachers to stop classes during the hours of prayer so as to allow students to go to the mosque if they so desire, or to a room in the school specifically set aside for this purpose.

Some observers even believe the religious movement influenced the recent strike--begun in late November and still continuing as of 22 December--of some 3,000 "Arabizing" university students from the faculties of law and economics in Algiers protesting against the lack of adequate job opportunities compared with those available to their fellow students following the bilingual (French and Arabic) curriculum. One of the graffiti on the walls of the student-housing buildings asks: "Is Algeria a French colony?"

This student agitation did even nearly turn into anti-American demonstrations related to the Iranian crisis. And authorities fear that the fundamentalists might succeed in mobilizing part of the youth against a regime which has proclaimed Islam as the state religion without making an effort to really Islamize political life.

Furthermore, the insistent demand for social justice expressed by supporters of fundamentalist Islam has touched a sympathetic chord not only among the working class but among the middle class and intellectuals as well. For the moment, the government does not seem to have a clear position on how to deal with the phenomenon. Some politicians, such as Salah Yahiaoui, the FLN [National Liberation Front] coordinator, are suspected of "flirting with the religious leaders." It will be recalled, in this connection, that on 1 May 1979, Yahiaoui publicly stated he opposed changing the official non-working day from Friday, whereas President Chadli had given instructions to return to observing that day on Sunday. The chief of state ultimately had to retreat and maintain the Friday ruling made by Houari Boumediene in 1976.

Discreet Repression

Neighboring Morocco is no exception to the rule. Our special correspondent, Mohamed Selhami, reports [in related article below] on the "breakthrough" fundamentalists have made in King Hassan II's country. Their progress has been such that it has the government worried. Without taking positions as firm as those taken in Tunisia, the government does appear to have initiated a policy of discreet repression, primarily so as to prevent the movement from extending into political matters. For in Morocco, perhaps more than in Tunisia and Algeria, the society outside the large urban centers has remained very deeply marked by Islam.

Sunni Islam, the Maghreb's majority religion, is considered to be more conformist than Iranian Shiism. But could anyone possibly imagine that the Maghreb would hold itself aloof at a time when Tehran, Islamabad, and Mecca are stirring? Despite the diversity of the situations, there is today in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia a Westernized elite suspicious of a movement which questions its way of life, and frequently its privileges.

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Government leaders in Algiers, Rabat, and Tunis allowed some religious movements to prosper because it appeared these movements could serve as a check on "politicization" and as an assurance of stability for the government. These leaders are now surprised to discover how vigorous a protesting and dissenting Islam can be.

Situation in Morocco

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Dec 79 pp 36-37

[Article by Mohamed Selhami: "The Moroccan 'Brothers'"]

[Text] Jawad is 19, but with his shaggy beard he looks like 30. He is a law student in Casablanca. But what makes Jawad eccentric is not his beard but his behavior. Each time he meets someone, he starts reciting verses from the Koran which he interprets in rather terrifying terms: "God forbids alcohol, gambling and pork.... Why not submit to divine law?" There's nothing to criticize in that part of Jawad's interpretation. There have always been young and not so young fundamentalists who have upheld Koranic instructions. Rarely have they ever been heeded, and even much less feared. But Jawad does not limit himself to prohibitions. He goes far, very far, in his interpretations. For example, he condemns social injustice and calls upon people to revolt. He also makes analyses that are an indictment of the Moroccan political system. "Our land is a land of Islam. The entire 'umma' (nation) [community of believers] must benefit from it. It is not written that mortals can appropriate thousands of hectares, buildings, housing, and rivers. Just as it is not written that other mortals cannot find even anything to eat." And Jawad named those to blame for this. "An end must be put to their brutalities. God will help us fight them."

"Jawad is one of those people," others whispered to me. Who are "those people"? The Moslem Brotherhood naturally! Yes! Those men who are getting a bad name in Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, and for a long time in Egypt, and recently in Saudi Arabia. There are some of them in Morocco too. Jawad is one of "those people" and he makes no secret of it. "I am an ikhwan (brother). God has so willed," he told us in a quiet voice and weighing his every word.

Moslem Brotherhood

Jawad lives in the Oasis, a residential section of Casablanca. His father is a senior executive in a construction company. This shows that the "ikhwane" can also come from middle-class intellectual circles. In fact, you see them everywhere. In Casablanca, but also in all of the kingdom's cities. There are hundreds of them, perhaps thousands. Nobody has managed to count them. New ones appear every day. "Recruitment" is easy. As Jawad explained it to us: "No effort is needed to convince others of the word of God. His word is convincing per se."

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Woe is he who ventures to hamper the preaching of the Moslem brothers. For some of them are prepared to do anything for their cause. A number of Moroccans remember the assassination of Omar Benjelloun, a socialist militant, on 18 December 1975. His death was attributed to Moslem brothers, many of whom were supporters of Shaykh Moti, a Moroccan who has since taken refuge in Saudi Arabia. But Morocco has other famous Shaykh Moti's, such as that school inspector, Abdessalam Yassine, who sent an open letter to the king. In it, he called upon the monarchy to show more respect for the precepts of Islam. Shaykh Yassine was jailed and then released. But on one condition, namely that he act openly. He is currently the editor of a review in Marrakech, AL-JAMA'AH (the community).

Return to Authenticity

Most of these Moslem brothers are graduates of university faculties of Islamic law (Sharia) or the secular university. Some are even graduates of Western schools and universities. All are militantly working for a return to Moslem authenticity. For that reason, they reject all consumer goods "invented by non-Moslems" (television, motion pictures, dance halls, etc.). Jawad told us these are "all ways and means likely to prevent human beings from believing in God and eternal life. Look at what this Western way of life leads to. It leads to prostitution, corruption, thievery, and egoism."

Jawad took us to a mosque in one of the sections on the outskirts of Casablanca, a former European and Jewish district. There is even a church there that has been converted into a mosque. When we commented on this transformation, the imam replied: "What does it matter? It was and still is the house of God." This imam was in his thirties, a carpenter by trade, and had studied the "Book" at a very early age in a Koranic school. "I didn't receive a diploma, but something better: faith in God and in his prophet Muhammad," he explained. In this gloomy and cold mosque, some 40 of the faithful began reciting the evening prayer. "Allahu Akbar" (God is great), they repeated in unison.

Some 5 minutes later, they were all seated in a circle facing the imam. For nearly an hour, the holy man preached and recited a Hadith dealing with human injustice. Nobody moved. His remarks were entirely political. It was almost like listening to an opposition member of parliament fiercely attacking the government. The imam spared only one person, the king. This was no oversight. The imam later explained to us that his sovereign was a man highly devoted to Islam. "He is the descendant of Sidna Muhammad. Criticizing him means belittling the prophet's family." In contrast, the imam was sharply critical of certain persons in the king's entourage, including some ministers "who give him bad advice."

Local authorities do not consider this imam dangerous. Others, definitely few in number, are much more dangerous because they blame the king. "That report is incorrect. There are no fanatics like that who besmirch the king's

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person," a senior political official told us. "There are agitators, extreme leftists who upon realizing they are ineffective change into Moslem fundamentalists. They are no more religious than Fidel Castro."

This same official also denied that the police were taking repressive measures against this phenomenon. Nevertheless, according to many witnesses, such repression did begin about 4 months ago. Some 100 "fanatics" are alleged to have been detained for questioning. Most of them are said to have been subsequently released. There are reports of some 10 arrests in Oujda.

Contain the Phenomenon?

One thing is certain: authorities are determined to contain this phenomenon. These are the same authorities who not so long ago were officially protecting the "Moslem brothers." Now, however, they fear that with democratic experience these brothers may organize and constitute a united force. The country's current critical social situation is conducive to their expansion. Moroccans are not very politicized but they are devoted to their religion. Hence they are extremely sensitive to any propaganda based on Islam. This explains why it is so easy for the Moslem brothers to recruit their followers. They have no need to appeal to pro-Khomeyni sentiment. Furthermore, unlike Shiite Iran, Morocco is Sunnite. The ikhwane's preaching is based on the land and Islam. When one realizes what these two words represent to 80 percent of the Moroccans....

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IRAN

SHAH OPPONENT DIAGNOSES REVOLUTION'S ILLS

Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 3-9 Sep 79 pp 36-37

[Interview with C. M., by Kenize Mourad; date and place not given]

[Text] A fierce opponent of the shah's regime and imprisoned for many years, the man speaking was one of the first to come out publicly -- at the risk of his life -- against violations of freedoms and the torture used in Savak prisons. Neither a fundamentalist Muslim nor a Marxist, he was one of the organizers of the rebellion that led to the downfall of the Pahlavi dynasty. He has decided to continue his fight in Tehran, but in order to tell his version of the truth about the Iran of Ayatollah Khomeyni, he was forced -- then and now -- to conceal his identity.

[Question] You are one of the heroes of the revolution. Why are you forced to hide in order to speak?

[Answer] Under the shah, if I had been killed, they would have known that the Savak did it. Today, there is such confusion in Iran that it is very easy to kill anyone who criticizes the regime. I do not question the official authorities, but the extremists: the guardians of the revolution, the committees or the different armed groups, who are often instigators.

[Question] At the present time, the Kurdish question is bathing Iran in blood. Can Khomeyni survive this massacre?

[Answer] If we do not grant autonomy, not only to Kurdistan, but to the different national minorities making up half of the population, the civil war that has already begun will spread throughout the country. The constitution must establish a decentralized system granting the Kurds, the Turkmens, Baluchis, Adzharian Turks and the Arabs in Khuzistan responsibility for their local affairs: administration, taxes and even the police. That is Iran's only chance for survival.

[Question] Does the constituent assembly envisage such a thing?

[Answer] No. Those who defended this viewpoint were not elected, nor were the four jurists who drafted the constitution. There was an incredible

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rigging of the elections: no freedom of propaganda; the tearing up of opposition posters and tracts. On election day, most of the urns were in the mosques, guarded by religious leaders who only provided Khomeyni's list. We could not even inspect the figures since everything was controlled by the Ministry of Interior.

[Question] In the West, there is severe criticism of the current regime. Aside from the problem of the minorities, what are your own criticisms?

[Answer] Westerners are against our revolution; that is natural. They lost \$90 billion, more than in any other cataclysm since World War II. If their business were as good as it was under the shah, they would not give a hang about defending our freedom! Now then, very serious things are happening in Iran. Human rights are being trampled. I publicly protested the revolutionary tribunals. That 400 persons should have been executed is normal: They were responsible for the massacre of tens of thousands of people. But that the courts should deliberate in secret and that there should be no right of defense is inadmissible, especially since the competency of the courts was recently extended to include any "counterrevolutionary" crime, whether political or economic. The term is very vague and one can call anything counterrevolutionary one wants.

[Question] Khomeyni had most newsmen imprisoned and has banned nearly all the leftist parties, declaring that they were plotting against the regime. What is your opinion?

[Answer] In Nadjav, when he was in exile in Iraq, and in Paris, Khomeyni officially stated that all newspapers and all parties would be free, particularly the leftist parties. I am absolutely opposed to the current procedure. If a newspaper or party "plots," the government prosecutes him and a civil tribunal must decide whether the accusation is well-founded. If the regime can carry out such arbitrary bans, we have come right back to the situation that existed under the shah. The shah said that in Iran, every freedom existed except the freedom to betray and for him, betraying meant not being in agreement with him. Now it is said that anything is permitted except plotting, and plotting means criticizing the regime in power. It is exactly the same thing, but before they said "treason" and now they say "conspiracy"!

[Question] Your account is all the more important because you come from a religious family, but without being involved in the struggle between the political groups.

[Answer] I am a democrat above all and I respect democrats, whether they be Muslims or leftists. I was first of all a member of Mosaddeq's National Front and then, in 1963, when all parties were banned, I continued my fight alone. I have fought fascism for 27 years. I now continue to fight another form of fascism. I shall fight until we obtain fundamental freedoms in Iran, no matter what price I have to pay.

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[Question] Do you not think it would be more effective to work within the government in order to try to change its policies?

[Answer] No, because unfortunately, the government does not have great power. The banning of newspapers and parties, the secret trials, the executions, are not decisions of the government. Often it is not even aware of them. I worries only about current affairs. Anything that has to do with policies is decided by the Revolutionary Council and the religious authorities.

[Question] Then why does Bazargan remain prime minister?

[Answer] Because he fears that if he resigns, there will be civil war everywhere. Bazargan is a deeply honest man, a true democrat. He was esteemed by the left as well as by the religious leaders. Unfortunately, he is gradually losing his prestige. He cannot do much and no one in his place would be able to do more because the government has no decision-making powers.

[Question] Unfortunately, the Iranian experience seems to prove that those who claim that an Islamic republic can be nothing but revolutionary are right.

[Answer] What is happening in Iran is the result of 25 years of dictatorship. We have no democratic traditions; the people who are leading us have retained the same ways they knew under the shah and his father. But actually, an Islamic republic must be a democratic republic. A true Muslim has the duty to criticize if he believes that something is unjust, even the imam, even the Prophet.

[Question] Even the Prophet?

[Answer] Yes. During the early days of Islam, Muhammad, his son-in-law Ali and Omar, the second caliph, were even criticized in the mosque. Today, one should be able to criticize Khomeyni. If he is a true Muslim, he must accept it.

[Question] Not only does he not accept it, but he is demanding a single party.

[Answer] Then we shall have the same situation as under the shah, who only authorized the imperial party. I hope that Khomeyni will give up this position. Otherwise, the whole revolution will have been nothing more than a change in facade.

[Question] But the people are with Khomeyni.

[Answer] That is true. All the peasants, the people in the markets, most of the lower middle class, half of the workers and part of the students follow the ayatollah because they are religious but also because they profited from the revolution materially or hope to profit from it. But

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do not forget that the Iranian people first of all fought for their freedom. The role of the intellectual minority is very important. It began the struggle against the shah and it is the intellectuals that can recommence the fight for human rights.

[Question] Bakhtiar also says he favors democracy. Do you believe he has any chance in Iran?

[Answer] No. He is a nationalist, but he made many mistakes when he was prime minister. Above all, everyone knows he was chosen by the Americans in order to try to prevent the advent of Khomeyni. The people will never forget this.

[Question] In the final analysis, do you regret the revolution?

[Answer] Certainly not. Our country was completely dependent, politically and economically, on the West, which grew rich at our expense. We totally lost our pride, our identity. You cannot imagine how much our people have changed in a year of fighting. No one used to dare to speak; everyone was afraid. Now, despite the danger, the people criticize and rebel. They now know that their action can radically change the situation. That is the true revolution.

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MAURITANIA

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT DISCUSSES VARIOUS PROJECTS

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 30 Nov 79 p 3328

[Text] Economy: detailed information on various projects. During an unexpected visit in F'Derick in mid-November, L Col Ould Haidalla, first vice president of CMSN (Military Committee for National Salvation), chief of the Mauritanian Government, referred to the various present economic problems.

Oil refining: earnest efforts have been made to carry out this project: the Ministry of Industry and Mines has contacted Algeria on this matter.

Sugar refining: Iraq has promised to send a mission to examine the documents relating to this project. It is also anticipated that this same country as well as France will send experts for the same reason.

Fishing: The mixed fishing companies will begin operations in the very near future. The chief of the government reexamined this subject in regard to fishing in Nouadhibou at which time he made a point to explain the reason for which the policy granting fishing licenses to foreign fishing companies had been rejected on the day after 10 July (see other side of the page).

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MAURITANIA

FRENCH FINANCING OF GUELBS PROJECT

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 14 Dec 79 p 3458

[Text] The Central Fund for Economic Cooperation [CCCE] and Mauritania, 8 December at Nouakchott, concluded an agreement granting Mauritania a loan of 150 million French francs for financing the Guelbs iron ore exploitation project to be initiated in 1982.

The first stage will cost around \$500 million and is to make possible the exploitation and enrichment of significant deposits of iron ore in the F'Derick area in the north and safeguard deposits still in operation in the same area. The first stage of the project will be limited to processing 6 million tons per year.

The National Industrial and Minist Company [SNIM] manager entrusted with carrying out the project and signer of the agreement with CCCE stated that after the French loan contribution, "more than half of the financial agreements relative to the Guelbs project will have been concluded." As a matter of fact, he pointed out that similar agreements had already been signed with Kuwait for the total amount of \$50 million, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (\$35 million), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries [OPEC], (\$5 million), Saudi Arabia (\$65 million), and the African Development Fund [FAD] for an amount not yet specified.

The French loan involves two installments: the first, 75 million French francs, repayable in 20 years with a 6-year deferred payment and at a 7 percent interest rate. The other credit of the same amount is subject to international market conditions and reimbursable in 15 years with a 5-year deferred payment.

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MAURITANIA

SNIM DEVELOPING NEW IRON ORE DEPOSITS

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 30 Nov 79 p 3328

[Text] Guelbs project: purchase of flat cars and tank cars. SNIM [National Industrial and Mining Company] is planning to issue contracts for equipment and production for the development of new iron ore deposits in Mauritania. In order to finance this project which will cost in the neighborhood of \$400 million, SNIM has requested loans from various corporations (Arab funds, ADB (American Development Bank), BEI (European Investment Bank), IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), Central Treasury).

In the framework of this program SNIM has entrusted SOCOMINE (Industrial Cooperation and Mining Company) with the management of this project and the latter has just published a notice of prequalification for purveying the following:

300 flat cars for iron ore, by regular transport, 34 cubic meters/79 tons capacity;

10 tank cars, by regular transport, 200 hectoliters/79 tons capacity.

Requests for prequalification must be addressed to SOCOMINE, 30 rue Cambonne, 75015 Paris under reference, "GUELBS-Avis-Project-Notice of prequalification D."

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MAURITANIA

MINISTER SETS FORTH GOVERNMENT'S FISHING POLICY

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 30 Nov 79 p 3328

[Text] Fishing: Mauritania intends to protect its resources and reap a profit.

During a meeting with the higher staff of the fishing companies held on the occasion of his visit to Nouadhibou, the Mauritanian minister for planning and fishing, Maj Ould Boukhreiss set forth the fishing policy which the Mauritanian government intends to follow in the future to prevent over-exploitation of the halieutic wealth of the Mauritanian coast by foreigners without any benefits accruing to the country.

The minister declared "in the future we intend to limit overfishing in order to preserve our resources and to participate in every means of exploitation and marketing of the fish taken from our waters, to the end of deriving all the profit possible.

Foreign shipowners who will be supplying our factories, will be given priority to fish in our national waters. In fact, "by deciding to significantly reduce foreign fishing and strictly control fishing and commercialization activities, the purpose of this objective is not only to preserve our resources against over fishing, but also to make our existing industries more profitable and increase revenue estimates."

On the other hand "in committing the government to make fishing on a small scale local production a basis for the development of the sector, the directorate established clear and distinct options as to the objectives and pattern of the development which it must follow, namely: control of the exploitation of piscicultural resources; optimization of the number of jobs generated by this exploitation; increase and just distribution of fishing returns; sufficient quantity of fish to be made available to the population; establishment of a solid base to serve as a support for the creation of a truly national fishing industry."

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MAURITANIA

BRIEFS

POSSIBLE IRON ORE PRICE INCREASE--Mr Ely O Allaf, administrator-business manager of the National Industrial and Mining Company (SNIM-sem), recently stated that there should be a substantial increase in the prices in iron ore in order to compensate for the slowdown now recorded and to enable producers to maintain reasonable exploitation conditions, because of the price increase in hydrocarbons and mining equipment. World consumption of iron ore is in the area of 320 million tons per year. Of this SNIM supplies 8.5 million tons. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 14 Dec 79 p 3458] 8870

FISHING MINISTRY--The Mauritanian minister of industrialization and mines, Mr El Moktar Ould Zamel, 4 December, laid the foundation stone of the future Mauritanian Ministry of Planning and Fisheries. This two-story building will house the minister's departmental staff and maritime directorate, that is to say, some 60 offices covering 3,100 m². The undertaking has been consigned to the Portuguese Fishing Company and to a Mauritanian ECT [expansion unknown] company. The work is to take 10 months and will cost around 5 million ouguiya. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 14 Dec 79 p 3459] 8870

FRENCH MARITIME AGREEMENT--France and Mauritania recently signed a cooperative agreement pertaining to maritime signaling. Its purpose is to enable it, with France's assistance, to pursue studies with a view to bringing into line and developing the network of lighthouses and beacons and also to train personnel entrusted with seeing to the working of land equipment and naval materials. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 14 Dec 79 p 3459] 8870

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JAPANESE LOAN--Japan: a \$14.4 million loan. On 22 November the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Japan will grant Mauritania a loan in the amount of 3,6 billion yen (about \$14.4 million). This loan, at the rate of 4 percent annual interest, repayable in 25 years, with a 7-year period of grace, is destined to aid Mauritania in realizing its Buelbs project for iron ore exploitation. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 30 Nov 79 p 3328] 7993

FRENCH ECONOMIC MISSION'S VISIT--Central Treasury: economic mission. On 14 November L Col Ould Ahmed Louly, chairman of CMSN (Military Committee for National Salvation), received a mission from the central treasury for French economic cooperation, who presented a report to the Mauritanian chief of state on the country's economic situation and the measures necessary for its rehabilitation. The members of the central treasury mission had previously met the officials of the various sectors of the economy, in particular those from SONELEC (National Electricity Company) for the purpose of trying to find a solution to the problems which the latter must face. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 30 Nov 79 p 3328] 7993

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MOROCCO

MOROCCAN FUGITIVE IMPLICATED IN ATTACK ON MOSQUE IN MECCA

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Dec 79 p 38

[Article by Hamid Barrada: "From Rabat to Mecca"]

[Text] The events that have so convulsed Saudi Arabia deeply affect Morocco too. Not only because no Moslem country, even though it may be far from Saudi Arabia, can remain indifferent to the outbreak of a bloody revolt in the midst of an annual pilgrimage and inside Islam's holiest shrine. Not only because the former Sharifian Empire is already experiencing a wave of Islamic protest. Not only because the Wahhabi and Alawite kingdoms have established a thousand and one affective and political relations between themselves. But for more specific and circumstantial reasons.

Benjelloun Case

In fact, JEUNE AFRIQUE is in a position to reveal that at least three Moroccan nationals have been jailed following the fighting in the Al-Haram al Sharif mosque and that one of them is not unknown in Morocco. He is Abdelkrim Moti whose name was widely mentioned after the assassination of Omar Benjelloun, one of the most well-known leaders of the USFP (Socialist Union of Popular Forces). The maltreatment to which he had been subjected and his repeated periods of imprisonment--he was sentenced to death in 1964 and subsequently pardoned--had not dimmed the combative spirit of this fiery leader of the Moroccan left. Ever since his party's January 1975 congress, he had been arguing in favor of an openly legalistic strategy. On 18 December 1975, however, he was fatally wounded by two individuals. One shattered his skull with an iron bar while the other stabbed him in the heart with a sharp shoemaker's tool. The police showed great diligence and arrested the murderers and their immediate accomplices. The investigation quickly revealed that they were merely "hit men" whose motives remained obscure. They were not even acquainted with "Omar" whom everybody knew. They belonged to a cell of Moslem activists but nothing in the USFP leader's action or views could account for their murderous attack on him. The persons questioned--they were young men--implicated Abdelkrim Moti as instigator of the crime. But Moti had already been able to flee from Morocco and take refuge in Saudi Arabia.

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Moti Suspected

Moti was in his forties and a school inspector. He had been highly active in the ranks of a labor union in the educational sector and also within the UNFP [National Union of Popular Forces] (the future USFP). He made a pilgrimage to Mecca in the late 1960's and returned to Morocco a changed man. Very soon thereafter he removed himself from all militant labor union activity and leftist politics to head an organization called Moslem Youth whose organizational structure remained quite nebulous. The organization distributed leaflets calling upon people to combat "evil." But it carefully avoided attacking the government. Its supporters preferred to violently attack members of the new (Marxist-Leninist) left who had become active in university faculties in the early 1970's. One of the new left's leaders who had "tangled" with them back in those days told us: "In our opinion, Moti's gang appeared to be encouraged by the police."

Nevertheless, was Moti actually involved in Omar Benjelloun's assassination? Was he not simply a convenient scapegoat in this "second Ben Barka case"? From his Saudi exile, Moti has never ceased protesting his innocence in a variety of ways. He has had a denial published in the Kuwaiti press. He has sent messages to USFP leaders. In one of his writings, he acknowledged that he was asked to organize Omar Benjelloun's assassination, but claims he declined. In short, everything indicates that determination of the truth demands that he be heard by the investigators, but oddly enough, no action has been taken to do this.

Some additional elements have heightened the confusion and misgivings of all those who are following this case. Last year, a fugitive named Naamani was arrested as he was trying to leave the country. According to the statements made by those accused of the crime, Naamani had transmitted Moti's orders to the perpetrators of Benjelloun's assassination. Naamani's arrest was considered important enough to be immediately and officially reported to the USFP leadership. But this important "capture" produced no clarifying developments in the case because, mysteriously enough, the accused was never brought before an examining magistrate. Furthermore, the official record of the interrogation of the accused disappeared. This record noted the relations both Moti and Naamani had had with "high-level Moroccan officials," relations also mentioned in other documents in the case. Despite these irregularities, the trial was scheduled to resume on 10 December 1979. Defense lawyers did not fail to invoke those irregularities in requesting and obtaining a postponement.

Mystery Remains

A contradictory impression emerges from all of the above considerations. It definitely seems that among those officials in charge of the investigation there are some who are doing their work properly while others persist in trying to obstruct the orderly process of justice. Yet now the main figure in the case has been arrested by the Saudi authorities. A sublime surprise.

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TUNISIA

STATUS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS REVIEWED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 5 Dec 79 pp 42-44

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen, Tunis correspondent]

[Text] Tunis-Carthage airport, Thursday 15 November. Simone Ben Othman arrives from Paris. Forbidden entry since she was exiled in February 1972, this dark-skinned, highly-strong young woman, after a 9-year separation, is now going to meet her husband again.

Twice convicted since 1968 and having done 22 years in prison for attacking government security, the "painter of urban scenes," Ahmed Ben Othman Raddaoui (J. A. No 964) was pardoned with eight other political prisoners on 3 August 1979, on the occasion of President Habib Bourguiba's 76th birthday (J. A. No 969). On that Thursday 15 November he was there, behind a barrier. Once assigned to living quarters in the remote hamlet of his native "douar," at 12 km from Kairouan, he was authorized to go to Tunis. They then informed Simone, by word of mouth, that she could come in.

There she comes. She hugs her husband and her mother, who are surrounded by lawyers and a delegation from the Tunisian Human Rights League. But, suddenly, some police officers remove Simone from the group and escort her to the airport headquarters. Panic. What has become of the guarantees? They begin to fear an expulsion. Fortunately, it was only a false alarm. Led before the examining magistrate, Simone Ben Othman realized that this meant a sentence in absentia delivered in August 1974 (on the same occasion that her husband was judged and sentenced for the second time). She was told that she could appeal the sentence and that meanwhile she was out on bail. As a matter of fact, the state police court would have to meet to settle the matter. And at 1800, 15 November, a taxi deposited Simone in the center of Tunis, in front of her mother's house where her husband has been staying for a month.

Like Ahmed Ben Othman, the other pardoned prisoners enjoyed only a relative freedom under a 10-year administrative supervision, as a rule in their respective native towns. But this measure is carried out more or less strictly. Thus, among Ben Othman's five prison companions, Nourreddine

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Ben Jheder was assigned living quarters in the South and work in Tunis in a publishing house. For Gilbert Naccache, agricultural expert, a native of Tunis, who had completed 9 of the 17 and 1/2 years to which he was sentenced, it is hard to find work. But the official who made out his identification card for him did him a favor. He furnished him with the job of day laborer instead of listing him as unemployed--which at the time of police raids, would have meant a stint in prison. Like Ben Othman, Naccache is trying to get a passport in order to go back to his family in France, and in particular, to his fiancée with whom he was given permission to get married while in prison in July 1973. But the young girl was expelled in 1974 and the marriage never took place. Early in October 1979, she was allowed to come to spend a week with him. As for Abdallah Rouissi, Mohamed Salah Fkiss and Rachid Bellalouna, they are still looking for work, respectively in the far south, far north and the central section of the country.

Omrane Alouene and Ahmed Karroud, two others pardoned on 3 August, have each found employment in their own villages, one with a confectioner, the other with a grocer.

As for Mr Habib Achour, former secretary general of the Tunisian General Federation of Labor (UGTT) and the best known of the nine, he is learning how to live like the former minister of foreign affairs, Mohamed Masmoudi, in a prison without bars. Whereas the ex-head of the diplomatic corps was never judged by any court, Habib Achour, in October 1978, was sentenced to 10 years' hard labor, of which he completed 10 months. Today, he is under house arrest in his own home on the outskirts of Tunis. Squads of 10 or so police officers take turns four times daily making rounds and supervising the gardens. They refuse to call him to the door and only his very close relatives have permission to enter. However, Habib Achour himself can be seen watering his garden. On this occasion, it is possible to exchange a few words with him about his health. It is the same type of conversation as he has on the telephone. He answers, but there is no question of exchanging anything but small talk. When some are amazed at his silence, especially regarding his fellow delinquents, his close relatives and loyal supporters remind them that his conditional release can be discontinued on the least pretext.

But Habib Achour is not an easy-going man. Accompanied by his son and two bodyguards, he was taken, one day, to his dentist, followed by a car crowded to capacity with policemen. Their guardian angels must have accompanied them right into the dentist's office. It was really the limit. Habib Achour flew into one of his Homeric rages and preferred to retrace his steps rather than be treated under such circumstances. His fits of anger, moreover, are a daily occurrence. For, to send for a workman or a stoker, these must be handpicked before they are allowed to enter the Achour residence.

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On the other hand, when things can have political repercussions, the authorities prove to be more understanding. Thus, a delegation of 15 people representing the "legitimate" UGTT administrative commission, on 23 August, was able to offer their best wishes to the former union leader on the occasion of the AID holidays marking the termination of Ramadan. Mr Vanderveken, deputy secretary general of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, lunched with Habib Achour (in the presence of a representative of social affairs, it is true) and conveyed an invitation to him, to which he was not permitted to accept, to a meeting of his organization. 19 November, in Madrid. The fact is that the UGTT former secretary general's Cerberus-like guardians possess every power except that of preventing him from very closely following present events and in particular trade union activity in the country.

And the others? How are the 3 August forgotten ones getting on? After their close relatives' painful disappointment, the day of their liberation seems to be getting increasingly farther away. But, today, with political policies (party assembly, legislative elections) a thing of the past, hope is reborn. The normalization achieved in the lives of the majority, of the nine pardoned on 3 August leads one to believe in a genuine determination for the appeasement of power. More especially as nothing justifies the lot of some in relation to that of others.

For example, the trade unionists. Ten fellow delinquents of Habib Achour, the principal defendant, who were sentenced at the same time as he to 5 to 10 years in prison, are still in the Tunis civil prison. Twenty-six other UGTT members from Mateur, Beja and Sfax, also sentenced after the 26 January bloody incidents, are still in the Bizerte penitentiary. Two among them, Mohamed Triki and Mohamed Chaabane, members of the executive board of the Sfax regional union, according to their families' statements, have been shut up in an underground cave hollowed out of the rock where the water seeps in from all sides. It was only after a 48-hour hunger strike that they were put in a prison with a small window. A French CGT [General Federation of Labor] medical delegation requested the immediate hospitalization of another union member. Also needed was the intervention of the International Federation of Metal Workers' secretary general in order to look into the case of Sahbani, from the Tunisian Federation of Metallurgy, whose state of health had grown progressively worse.

Those who have the sad privilege of being the oldest still held in prison today number 15, sentenced in October 1975 to from 4 and 1/2 years to 9 years. This group from the AL-AMIL AL-TUNIS (THE TUNISIAN WORKER, a prohibited newspaper), last 15 August, was transferred from Borj Roumi, to the Tunis civil prison. A transfer which had every appearance of a disciplinary measure, as these men have been deprived of newspapers and television as well as cooking utensils, and their relatives have been prohibited the second weekly visit allowed by law. In response to protests,

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these measures have since been greatly eased. Only one member of the group has benefited from the president's pardon of 3 August. He is Omrane Alouene who was adopted by International Amnesty whose action proved fruitful.

Of the 17 members of the Tunis Progressist Liberation Front, arrested in 1975 and sentenced in 1976 to 6 to 12 years in prison, 13 have also been freed. But four are still in a barrack room at Borj Roumi. They are the forgotten ones. Their parents, who for the most part, live in the south, cannot come to see them.

Also freed are four of the seven students sentenced in 1977 (2 to 5 years in prison) for having stirred up riots on the university campus. The three others are in the Nador prison. Still imprisoned are four members of the Tunisian Progressist Revolutionary Party (PRPT) and 21 of the group from the underground newspaper AL-'SHA'B. Sentenced in mid 1979, they are serving sentences which run from 3 to 8 years of prison.

On the whole, there are now fewer than 100 convicted political and trade union prisoners, the majority for having held sacrosanct article 8 of the Constitution which states that freedom of opinion, the press, broadcasting, assembly and association are guaranteed. Guaranteed, no doubt, but within the framework of a body of law composed of texts used again any attempt at organization and expression which, it is often true, have as their avowed objective to overthrow the government. It is also true that these young leftist political militants pay dearly for the fact of making known their opposition to the government. To aim at giving Tunisia a democratic image and holding political prisoners in government prisons is inconsistent.

As it is, the liberalism which prevails there could be eagerly desired by a number of Africans far less well off. Why not take the final step? Today, a petition is circulating throughout the country picking up hundreds of signatures for "the freeing of the political and trade union prisoners." In Tunis, Bizerte, Beja, Mateur, Le Kef, Sfax, Sousse, Gabes and Kairouan, doctors, lawyers, engineers, university professors, artists as well as civil servants, workmen, people of every persuasion are appealing to the head of state to release from their jails the prisoners held there because of their ideas. A new development in Tunisia, we only hope and trust in the outcome of a vigorous leadership. A certain 40-year old man, a bank employee explains why he signed: "As for petitions, I don't believe in them. But comrades who insist that by constantly requesting the release of Habib Achour that they obtained it could not be wrong. So, I am signing for the release of the others.

The 3 August presidential pardon went into effect on the eve of the 10th Destourien Socialist Party Congress where they would have liked to see the beginning of a genuine liberalization of national political life. Can we

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stop at that, after the elections? (J. A. No 985). Everything leads us to believe in the existence of a desire for the abatement of power which could not fail to be favorably received by the great body of Tunisians. It would, moreover, give evidence of the renewal of a serious dialogue regarding a syndicalist world and its consequences, which has not been taken up again since 26 January 1978, as the recent legislative elections have made clear.

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WESTERN SAHARA

CONCESSIONS ON BOTH SIDES NEEDED TO END SAHARAN WAR

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 12 Dec 79 p 15

[Article by Jean-Louis Buchet: "The Wise Men: An Empty Chair"]

[Text] Chaired by William Tolbert, the Liberian head of state, the OAU Committee of Wise Men for Western Sahara met in Monrovia on 4-5 December. Algeria, in the person of President Chadli Bendjedid, Mauritania and the Polisario accepted the invitation of the current OAU president. Morocco was conspicuous by its absence. Poorly handled, the Moroccan empty chair policy was also very badly received. After announcing his coming, Hassan II asked for the meeting's report before deciding to boycott it. This was termed a "stealthy retreat" in the Liberian capital. The charge of "partiality" leveled against certain members of the Committee of Wise Men (Mali and Tanzania) ill conceals the reality: Rabat was seeking in advance to discredit a meeting which promised to be unfavorable to its policy.

For the past 6 months, diplomatic failures have been accumulating for Morocco. The Sixth OAU Summit in Monrovia in July and the Non-Aligned Nations in Havana in September approved resolutions favoring the Polisario and Algeria. In November, at the United Nations, a resolution reaffirming "the inalienable right to self-determination and independence of Western Sahara," recognizing the "legitimacy" of the struggle of the Polisario front and deploring "the Moroccan occupation" obtained a large majority: 83 countries voted for it, as opposed to 4 which sided with Morocco. These represent so many points scored by the Saharan guerrillas and their Algerian protector. Finally, in recent weeks, increased Moroccan-Mauritanian tension could lead the Nouakchott authorities to a rapprochement with Algeria because they are concerned with staying on the sidelines after signing the peace agreement on 5 August 1979 with the Polisario and giving up Tiris el-Gharbia.

Rabat's diplomatic isolation has been accompanied, it is true, by a recovery in the field. Launched with great publicity, "Operation Ohoud" showed Morocco's determination and its willingness to display military might to the Polisario (JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 985). Military operations--for some time

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favoring the Saharan guerrillas--have been equalized. But Ohoud's impact is as much psychological as military: in 3, 6 or 10 months, the Polisario will have adapted its strategy to the Moroccan riposte. Moreover, on the eve of the Monrovia meeting, the attack on Zaak, a garrison town within uncontested Moroccan borderlines, proved that the guerrillas' combat spirit had scarcely been dampened. Morocco's military defeat seems impossible. But a victory remains quite improbable.

Unable to get rid of the Saharan guerrillas, condemned and isolated diplomatically, is Morocco on the verge of losing? No matter what is said, Rabat is not very worried about the resolutions of the Committee of Wise Men: 4 years after the departure of the Spanish, self-determination can no longer be contemplated in the Sahara. Although the Moroccans are not succeeding in imposing their will militarily, it is foolish to think that they will give in to attrition: firmly supported by his people, Hassan II could still ask additional sacrifices from them to continue for a long time. Then too, he has obtained some limited but significant support.

In Africa, the Guinean President Ahmed Sekou Toure (member of the Committee of Wise Men) decided not to go to Monrovia in the absence of the sovereign. Internationally, Saudi Arabia, for the first time, voted in favor of Morocco at the UN, while Spain and Romania abstained, provoking Algeria's wrath. Also abstaining was the United States, which is providing support that is as firm as it is nuanced by delivering airplanes and helicopters expected for months in Morocco. The same is true in the socialist camp. Romania is supplying weapons. And--this is new--light, Soviet-type weapons, similar to those used by the Polisario, are now coming from China.

Consequently, the meeting of wise men in Monrovia was only one more episode in a conflict which could go on. But go where? Four years after it began, the only solution that can be envisioned is peace without victors or vanquished. A realistic attitude will require Morocco to accept what the Polisario already knows, even if it will not admit it: concessions are needed on both sides.

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WESTERN SAHARA

BOTH SIDES IN SAHARAN CONFLICT MUST AGREE TO NEGOTIATE

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 14 Dec 79 pp 3437, 3439

[Text] The OAU [Organization of African Unity] ad hoc committee entrusted with examining the Western Sahara problem met on the 4 and 5 December in Monrovia. Among the OAU "wise men," President Ahmed Sekou Toure refrained from attending it on the grounds that the absence of Morocco did not permit him to take part in works which were carried out under the chairmanship of the Liberian head of state, by Presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Gaafar Nimeiri of the Sudan, Moussa Traore of Mali and Alahji Shehu Shagari of Nigeria.

As to the position of President Houphouet-Boigny, who in the past played a modest intermediary part, it has long been known. The Ivory Coast president recently recalled it in a speech delivered on the eve of the 19th anniversary of his country's independence: only a straightforward dialog between Morocco and Algeria will make it possible to arrive at a solution to the conflict.

Countries party to the conflict have been invited. Algeria was represented by its president, Chadli Bendjedid, Mauritania by its minister of foreign affairs, Ahnadou Ould Abdallah and the POLISARIO [Front for the Liberation of Western Sahara] Front by its secretary general, Mohamed Abdelaziz. The Moroccan king, Hassan II, had finally decided not to go to Monrovia. His proposal was presented in detail by the Moroccan minister of foreign affairs, Mr M'hamed Boucetta. It can be summed up in this established rule of a Moroccan minister: "One cannot, at one and the same time, be appeaser and party to the case."

Tanzania has, as a matter of fact, officially recognized the POLISARIO Front. As to Mali, Morocco is critical of its president, General Moussa Traore, for having, on several occasions, openly and publicly expressed his sympathy for the Saharan cause. Morocco has also harbored resentment toward OAU for having, unknown to it, it says, invited from opposing sides, an official UN representative and especially for having invited the POLISARIO, which is not recognized by either the UN or the OAU. This invitation exceeds the recommendations of the committee leaders, according

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to the Moroccan proposal reminding them that the preceding OAU president, Marshal Nimeiry, had never invited the POLISARIO to Khartoum at the time of the two preceding meetings of the Committee of Leaders, nor even agreed to its being heard at Monrovia.

Its work concluded, the Committee of Leaders adopted a 10-point recommendation, among the most important of which are the following: OAU urgently requests Morocco to withdraw all its troops from the entire Western Sahara as well as its administration of the Sahara region evacuated by Mauritania. All parties are asked to impose a cease-fire immediately to make possible the holding of a just and free referendum which is to be supervised by an OAU peace-keeping force and whose organizational technical details are to be studied conjointly with the UN, whose representative of the secretary general in Monrovia has declared himself ready to help the OAU in holding said referendum in the event it is agreed upon "by all parties concerned."

-- The recommendation also requests that the international community refrain from "any action capable of hindering the work" of the Committee of Leaders and asks the king of Morocco to cooperate fully with it. Lastly, Mauritania is complimented on "its courageous and forthright decision which resulted in the signing of a treaty of peace with the POLISARIO Front and its waiver to any claim to Western Saharan territory."

The aggregate of these recommendations is in accordance with the resolution of the OAU summit meeting held in Monrovia last July and is obviously inspired by the desire of the totality of African states: mainly, to avoid any foreign intervention in the conflict to which only the Africans are to discover a solution. To do this, they must first and foremost create "an atmosphere" favorable to an amicable settlement, which was the prime objective of the last Committee of Leaders' meeting. It also includes the disappointment caused by President Sekou Toure's absence and especially by that of King Hassan which President Tolbert severely criticized.

Unexpected on the other hand is the recommendation to set up an OAU peace-keeping force. It is the first time, in the Sahara affair, that this organization is contemplating creating solely African United Nation troops and that the OAU is seriously considering making use of its political resources. In fact, it is in all likelihood the most effective means of removing any excuse on the part of foreign powers on the continent to send troops to support one or other of the parties, as did the delegates to the last Lagos congress on Chad who decided to send Ndjamena Guinean, Benin and Congolese troops who were to replace the French troops there.

Undoubtedly, OAU has already embarked on the building up of an inter-African force on which its defense committee is working. But just as such an ambitious project runs into reservations and difficulties which can be overcome only after endless discussions, so also building up a reduced military force to meet a particular situation could be achieved without any outstanding difficulty if all interested parties agreed to its basic principles.

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That is where OAU's limitations become obvious. It can propose solutions, issue recommendations, establish a system of laws on which it can base the diplomatic process for exerting certain pressures on the parties in question. But OAU no more than the UN has the means of enjoining a solution. Nor does it desire it either. The Committee of Leaders, President Tolbert emphasized, "did not wish to give official approval to anyone whatsoever to set up a court of justice. . . but to approve taking preparatory measures so that all parties can one day come together to discuss matters." "It is certain," the OAU secretary general, on his part, acknowledged, "that we are not in a position today to carry out the Monrovia decision. These decisions, however," he said, "constitute a comprehensive picture of what weighs heavily on the issues."

Will they weigh heavily on Morocco? This emerged weakened on the diplomatic level from the UN General Assembly discussions which, by a 85 vote against 7 and 41 abstentions, adopted its decolonialization committee's resolution, enjoining it to withdraw from the Sahara. The number of African states which recognized the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic is running the risk of exceeding the number of those which so far have abstained from doing so. Within the Arab world, only Egypt and Saudi Arabia are openly supporting the Moroccan position. Relations between Morocco and Mauritania have recently worsened to the extent that Nouakchott has considered bringing the problem of the Moroccan troops' withdrawal from Bir Moghreïn before the Security Council. Lastly, the grand shérif's refusal to come to the defense of his country's position before the Committee of Leaders was seen, at one and the same time, as a lack of respect for the OAU and the admission of his own weakness.

King Hassan II nevertheless appears optimistic and, according to recent statements in the American weekly magazine TIME, he sees the Sahara pacified next year by his own army. Operation Ohoud, the creation of three powerfully armed flying columns, make evident the sovereign's determination to adopt more dynamic tactics in dealing with the POLISARIO whose operations will be so obstructed that it will have found no answer but whose offensive capacity does not appear weakened since, these last few days, it has still been able to aim direct blows at both Moroccan territory and at Zak.

Despite the delivery, still in the distant future, by the United States, of combat planes and helicopters, carefully limited in number, moreover, (to which it is true that President Carter could add eight F5C fighter planes, as he has just proposed to the American congress, without taking OAU recommendations into account) and coupled with a pressing invitation to open negotiations, can Morocco, any more than the POLISARIO, under existing geopolitical control, reasonably expect to win final control of the territory. Contemporary history, in numerous examples, proves that the advantage anticipated in a military victory can be lost at a peace conference. Sooner or later, as OAU hopes, all parties will agree to negotiate a settlement made possible by their mutual concessions, without conquerors or conquered.

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WESTERN SAHARA

OBJECTIVES, BACKGROUND OF OPERATION OHOUD DETAILED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 21 Nov 79 pp 23-30, 33

[Article by Raphael Mergui: "The Great Counteraction"]

[Excerpts] The Moroccan army, cloistered in security belts that protect urban centers yet themselves are vulnerable, has looked on powerless at the proliferation of POLISARIO bases right within the Western Sahara. After months of apparent military paralysis, Hassan II had decided to pick up the challenge. Operation Ohoud, prepared in great secrecy, was unleashed from Tan-Tan on 29 October.

Our special correspondent Raphael Mergui and photographer Pascal Matrie experienced the first 10 days of that now phase of the war of the sands.

The armament of the Royal Armed Forces (FAR) was inferior to that of the POLISARIO in firepower and range. Rabat has not stinted on the equipment. The Ohoud Division is entirely reequipped. Today it has a jump on its adversary.

The armored material, accumulated for months, has come from all manner of sources. Used experimentally, it is undergoing the test of the desert, often for the first time.

This is not the first time that American M-113 cross-country track vehicles were used in a theatre of operations. The same is not true of the French wheeled VAB's (vehicles with armored front ends). Made by the Renault subsidiary Saviem, they have been in the news in Europe. The Belgian Army caused an uproar in Paris by preferring American track vehicles over them. Astonishingly fast--doing 80 km an hour on all terrains--they are armed with a 20-mm machine gun. Besides their large range they give effective protection to the troops being transported.

What is most astounding in this very mobile war is the use of French-Austrian Iska tanks. Essentially designed to combat other tanks on a

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conventional front, they slow down the column's advance considerably. Yet they were retained because of their firing precision and their effectiveness in static battles.

But the Stalin tank is still the star of this war. The Moroccans are in a good position to know the terrible material and psychological destruction it can cause. Thus, in imitation of the POLISARIO, they bought some in Romania, or perhaps in the Soviet Union. Money talks! The Stalin tanks have 18 tubes mounted on a Molotov truck. Each rocket costs 1 million centimes.

The 6,000 men of the Ohoud Division were taken from units stationed in the North. But most of them have already fought in the Sahara. Some have even been in all of Morocco's wars. Ahmed told me: "I fought in the Golan sector in 1973. The next year I returned to the Sahara with the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces. I remained there until my departure for the two Shaba [Province conflicts in the Congo] in 1977 and 1978. I have just come back from them and here I am again. I have five children whom I do not have any time to see. But that doesn't matter. I know that the Sahara is only sand, but it is an Algerian pretext to weaken Morocco. That is why I answer 'present' to all of his majesty's calls."

The soldiers' heads entirely wrapped in scarves as protection against sun and sand given the FAR a curious look of an army of shadows. The women, numbering about 30, are radio operators in the combat units. Jamila never forgets to put on her make-up each morning.

All of them, men and women, have the queen of sidearms, the Russian Kalashnikov, as does the POLISARIO. Brand new, they were bought in Romania, or offered by Egypt. Sadat's surprise gift to Hassan II was two C-130 cargo loads of "kalashes" and RPG's--rocket-launching guns. For now, that is all as far as Egyptian aid is concerned. Morocco has declined Egyptian military advisors and, according to the Rabat leaders, does not want to negotiate directly for military material assistance.

Colonel Harchi, working with Col Ben Othman, drove out the Algerians from Amgala in 1976. He commands an elite unit, the 8th Infantry Regiment. Here, no officer wears any insignia. Harchi is a Rif. His deputy, nicknamed Papa Charly, is a Saharan. A veteran of the Sahara war, he arrived with the Moroccan liberation army 15 km from El Aïum in 1959. He fought for Tindouf in 1963. That is his Jerusalem. Harchi and Papa Charly are leading a Moroccan-version war of secession. Their men, like them, are Rifs or Saharans, especially from the Ait Oussa tribe. Frugal, they feel a touch of scorn for the "Northerners" who cannot do without having their tajin cooked every evening, even at the risk of being spotted by the enemy. But they too have their whims: the 8th Regiment transported two camels that it then slaughtered and will use as dried meat. Patient and crafty, they can melt away into the ochre land of the Sahara and wait for the enemy for days and nights on end. They have but one love, the Land Rover, and nothing but disdain for the "bulky machines" that force them to move at 30 km an hour.

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The 8th Regiment is the advance point of the Ohoud Division. When the head of the convoy comes in sight of a height where the enemy might be hiding, it stops. Lurking within firing range of the hill, a few jeeps of the 8th Regiment stamp in place like race horses. Then the harsh trigger goes into operation: some of them "squirt" on the sides of the hill while others clamber up it. In that desett warfare, mobility means staying alive. When the hill is occupied, the convoy can go on.

Ohoud is a combined ground and air operation. At their bases, Mirages and F-5's are ready to intervene. Sometimes they come along and "salute" the convoy as they skim along the ground. A few Bell helicopters and a Puma keep up with the division.

A Strategy and Resources

The armade of 1,500 vehicles and 6,000 men camps on the broken cliffs overhanging the Atlantic. We are a few tens of kilometers from Tan-Tan. On Monday, 29 October, the convoy cautiously enters the road to Tarfaya. "Operation Ohoud" has begun. The evening before, Colonel-Major Ahmed Dlimi told us what the objective was in his mobile command post: "Cleaning up the pockets occupied by the POLISARIO." That objective is at the same time an implicit acknowledgment that the military situation in the Western Sahara has seriously deteriorated. When the POLISARIO reached the suburbs of Tan-Tan last 28 January, Hassan II had a presentiment that he had to reconsider his military strategy. At that time, a decision was already taken: the establishment of a mobile division that would be the steel fist of the Royal Armed Forces. The increasingly bold and massive POLISARIO attacks this past summer against the Moroccan towns and positions in the Sahara (Bir Anzarane, Lebouirate, Smara, Mahbes) confirmed his presentiment.

Since 1977 the POLISARIO has been carefully weaving a logistic network permitting it to organize repeated attacks against the Moroccan positions from its own bases in Sakiat al-Hamra and Rio deo Oro. The relative proximity of its sanctuaries guarantees the POLISARIO relative impunity. The war of fixed positions has condemned the Royal Armed Forces to paralysis. Often Moroccan garrisons that could have dealt the enemy a setback did not budge an inch. It was no doubt to give the sector commanders more initiative that the position of chief of staff of the southern front that was held by Colonel Major Abrouk was abolished. At Samara, a basic air observation would have enabled the alarm bell to the rung before the 6 October assault took place. Like all other armies, the FAR do not like a defensive war. The extremely long wait for an enemy who never seems to arrive finally dulls the vigilance of the officers and men. That is when serious gaps occur that an attentive POLISARIO is quick to take advantage of. That is the explanation for the confusion at Lebouirate. There then follows a demoralization that very often is misinterpreted by foreign observers. It is not fear of war or weariness but rather a rage to fight more aggressively. Added to the war of fixed positions is the shortage of competent cadres, which have not increased in proportion to the increase in the army's strength.

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In short, Morocco was running the risk of bearing the cost of the iron law of wages that pertains in all such wars. A guerrilla who does not lose wins. A regular army that does not win loses. Morocco, an officer told me, "has deluded itself with a dual political and military illusion: first, that Algeria would finally come to terms, and second, that the POLISARIO, an artificial creation, was nothing more than band of roving Saharans barely able to inflict pinpricks on the Moroccan Army." Rabat seemed to be caught in a terrible dilemma: adopting the same type of warfare as the POLISARIO and turning its army into units of scrappers, certainly more effective but also more undisciplined, would at the same time mean lessening its ability to undertake a possible conventional war against Algeria.

Hassan II chose a midway solution that after all seems to be justified by the installation of the POLISARIO in fixed, common and registered bases, and its conversion to a more conventional type of warfare.

The Ohoud Division, which is actually a tactical regrouping of units taken from the northern army, combines units of armored cars, infantry and highly mobile commando groups, and that should ensure its having a certain flexibility of intervention. Its range of action extends to all parts of the Sahara acquired by Morocco in 1975 and 1979.

The Ohoud Division obviously does not replace the town defense system or the sector patrols. It is in fact one more piece added to the old structure, but an essential piece just the same. Once the decision to create it was taken around February, all that was left to be done was to place orders and accumulate material, and above all find a leader for the division. It was probably after the Bir Anzarane battle and the Lebouirate catastrophe that Hassan II decided to choose Colonel-Major Ahmed Slimi. The king's chief aide-de-camp, he is in fact, along with Ahmed Reda Guedira, the closest of the Moroccan sovereign's collaborators. He has kept us on all aspects of the Sahara developments, including the diplomatic ones. The man is a politico-military. This was not a matter of chance.

It is said of Slimi that he has never been in favor of the famous "theory of 100 points" that gave the Moroccan side of the war its static nature. But for all that, Slimi is not convinced that an army of commandos would suffice. He wants to engage in an American type of war, that is, a war that is certainly mobile but also sparing in human lives through the use of relatively sophisticated material. Doesn't he like to say that one does not win by being in "the grocery business?"

The authority with which the king has directly invested him, plus his own prestige, will have considerable weight on the outcome of the Sahara war. But conversely, by entrusting the Ohoud operation to Slimi, Hassan II is laying down an important card. A military defeat would seriously tarnish the prestige of the Royal Armed Forces.

Slimi has surrounded himself with an excellent staff. His officers are used to working together. They have proven themselves on several fronts. Most

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of them were hardly back from the Golan sector than they were mobilized against Spain in 1974 and, finally, to occupy the Western Sahara in 1975. Some of them are just back from Shaba [Province]. Among themselves, they like to be called the "12 bastards," alluding to a well-known film. They even carry watches and wearboots.

All of them have the same kind of admiration for their chief, who cultivates a kindly attitude toward them without every giving way to familiarity. Dlimi's presence has much to do with the dynamism of that army of 6,000 men. Thus, as soon as the material was received and the team formed, units were taken from the military regions in the northern part of the country. All those men were assembled in late September at the Ben Guerir base, some 50 km from Marrakech, where Dlimi had discreetly installed himself.

There followed a rapid blending of the troops, officers and material. After a few maneuvers the convoy began to move on to its next stage, Agadir. Part of the quartermasters had gone ahead: supplies had been stocked along the convoy's main stages. The secret was well guarded. No soldier knew the purpose of the mission. Some took on business for 2 weeks....

At the very most, in Rabat, the "wide-awake" observers, as they say, had noted two curious facts: the disappearance of Dlimi and the unusual congestion along the Marrakech-Agadir highway.

In late October, the entire convoy was assembled at Tan-Tan, whence it was to begin its long march to its first large stage: Dakhla. There, it had to dispose of its logistics to begin the first phase of its "real job": the systematic combing out of the former Tiris el-Gharbia.

That is why two countries, Mauritania and France, were notified of the imminence of the Ohoud operation. Mauritania, because the POLISARIO recruits fighters in Mauritania and has some bases there in the north. Also because it still occupies La Guera, opposite Nouadhibou, which the Moroccans have a good chance of taking. France, because it has committed itself to guaranteeing "Mauritania's neutrality."

What does Rabat expect from the operation? The ultimate objective is easy to guess: to thrust back the POLISARIO fighters (estimated at 5,000 by the Moroccan general staff) into Algerian territory, to reduce them to a sort of frontier army, idle and thus troublesome for its host country, Algeria. The latter would then have only two solutions: either to finally negotiate with Morocco or raise the bidding by encouraging new undertakings by the POLISARIO. In the latter case, Rabat would no longer temporize and would exercise its right of pursuit. It is in this context that an explanation lies for the Algerian communique taking note of the advance eastward of the Moroccan Army, whereas the latter was headed...southward. Mere anticipation?

The FAR have set a period of 6 to 12 months to attain their objective. Do they have the resources for that? The Ohoud Division may undertake a

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a systematic cleaning out of the "pockets" held by the POLISARIO. The latter has a choice of three responses. The first is to reassemble all its forces to attempt to smash the Ohoud Division. That possibility is purely theoretical: it presupposes logistic means and forces two or three times greater than those of the Moroccan division, which is not the case. A Saharan Dien Bien Phu is very unlikely. The second response is to resist. Retrenched in its mountainous redoubts, it could certainly inflict losses on its adversary, but the weight of the numbers and firepower of the Moroccan side would win out in the end. The third response is to refuse to fight and to fallback in order toward Algeria and Mauritania. That would conform to the logic of guerrilla warfare. Should the POLISARIO fall back, with or without combat, Dlimi will have won an initial victory, that of disorganizing a logistics that had to be set up after 2 or 3 years of slow and patient effort. But the Moroccan victory would be ephemeral. In fact, how could the POLISARIO be prevented from returning once the Ohoud operation was over?

Morocco is condemned to set up three or four of the same kind of divisions as the Ohoud Division, whose mission is experimental and limited in time. Each division would have to cover a radius of around 30 km to keep the POLISARIO definitively out of the Sahara zone. The OVIO reconnaissance airplanes will be a great help. Obtained from the U.S. Army stocks, the first ones should not be long in coming. The real problem lies elsewhere: this gigantic desert police force will require the mobilization of 15,000 to 20,000 men. This constitutes an unknown economic factor and a military risk.

The maintenance of a 20,000-man army in constant movement is extremely costly. Does Morocco possess the resources for that? Where will these men come from? Such an option will permit the abandonment of posts that have become useless, such as Bir Anzarane and Mahbes (the FAR, moreover, have not reoccupied the latter, and cutting down on the forces in the security belts. But that is not enough. Inevitably it will mean withdrawing some of the forces from the northeastern border with Algeria. Moroccan strategists believe the risk is a reasonable one: Algeria would have no interest in going into open conflict with Morocco. If that did happen, the FAR officers think they are quite ready to cope with it. One colonel told me: "Algeria and Libya are heading for a result that is entirely contrary to the one they are seeking: instead of weakening Morocco, they are forcing it to equip itself with one of the most powerful armies in Africa. Algeria's superiority in aircraft and armored cars is illusory, because it lacks qualified personnel to service them. As for us, we are on the way to becoming masters of logistics, our soldiers are seasoned and our officers broken in to exercising command. The quartermasters is the nerve center of warfare. Even in modern warfare, man is more important than material."

War is a last resort. Ohoud is a battle for a negotiation. By showing their teeth, the Moroccans hope to induce the Algerians to change their attitude.

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Battle in Three Acts

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[Text] The king of Morocco has given the name Ohod (or Ohoud according to the Moroccan phonetic transcription) to the new military operation mounted in the Sahara. The designation refers to one of the main battles fought by the emigree Moslems at Medina against the heathens of Mecca in the spring of 625, that is, during the third year of the Hegira (the Moslem era). It took place at the initiative of the Meccans, who wanted to avenge their dead fallen in the battle of Badr that had gone to the Moslems' advantage a year earlier. This is how Ibn Hishen, author of the famous Sira (biography of the prophet Mohamed) tells of Ohod:

"Qoraish (the large tribe of Mecca), which had assembled to fight God's Messenger, got underway and established its headquarters opposite Medina. God's Messenger left to take up position on the ravined slope of Mount Ohod, above the valley, placing his troops with their backs to the mountain and ordering that no one should engage in combat until they received the order to do so. God's Messenger prepared himself for the combat. He had 700 men. He named Abdallah Ibn Jobeyr, dressed entirely in white, commander of the archers, numbering about 50. He said to him: 'I entrust you with the mission of defending us against the horsemen (of Qoraish) with arrows, to keep them from attacking us from the rear. The archers must not leave their positions, whether the fighting turns in our favor or against us. We must not be attacked from the place you are occupying.'

"God's Messenger put on two breastplates and entrusted the standard to Mosaab Ibn Omeyr, the ally of the Beni Abd-ed-Dar.

"God gave the Moslems victory and kept his promise to them; and the enemies were dislodged from their positions by the saber. Their defeat was no longer in doubt. Seeing that, the Moslem archers abandoned their posts, leaving the rear of the troops (of the Prophet) exposed. The enemy rushed up (on the Moslems) and attacked them from the rear. The ranks of the Moslems were dispersed under the shock attack. God's Messenger, wounded in the face, lost a tooth and had one lip split. The enemy then cried out 'Mohamed is dead!' But the Moslems surrounded God's Messenger and fought like heroes to defend him until they succeeded in driving the infidels back."

Tradition has given an important place to that battle, the details of which long filled the chronicles. The three stages of the combat, the initial Moslem success, the set back caused through the fault of the archers, and the fight to death to repulse the enemy, bring to mind a thesis tragedy. Is it that sequence of events in three stages that Hassan II had in mind in comparing the present battle in the Sahara to the third part of the battle Ohod? That probably is the most correct explanation: to recover, fight to the death, fight like heroes to finally repulse the enemy

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that is indeed what the Moroccans seem to want to do. But the outcome of Ohod in history is the subject of controversies.

There is no doubt that militarily it does not represent a defeat for the Prophet's companions: they numbered only 700 men against 3,000 Meccans who, in addition to their numerical advantage, had a cavalry commanded by the best strategist of that time, Khaled Ibn-el-Walid.

The flanking movement achieved by Khalid Ibn-el-Walid through the fault of the Moslem archers could have brought on a true disaster; and if Mohamed had been killed on the battlefield, Islam would probably have had a short life. The fierce resistance of the Moslem fighters, hurriedly regrouped around the Prophet, overcame the best Meccan troops.

On the other hand, whereas Ohod represented for Moslems a moment of great military bravery, it profoundly shocked and badly hurt the solidity of the Medina community: Hamza, the Prophet's uncle and champion of the believers, feared by the Meccans, was killed in that battle along with 69 other brave men, whose spirit of sacrifice and prowess are stressed in the chronicles; the archers set little value on discipline and showed themselves to be more eager to seize their share of the booty than to obey the head of the community; part of the troops fled toward Medina believing that Mohamed had actually been killed, and he had to exhort them in person to return to the combat so that the rout would not spread; and lastly, when the enemy was repulsed and Mohamed, being a good tactician, ordered them pursued, only 70 men responded to his call. That indicates all the ambiguity in the present-day choice which, moreover, tends to liken the "people on the other side" to unbelievers and to impart a mystic dimension to the fighting in the Sahara.

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